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Was JFK triggered by Fidel Castro?

By PATRICK J. BUCHANAN

WASHINGTON — When John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas 15 years ago, it was immediately assumed he was the victim of the Crazy Right.

When the assassin was discovered to be a Castroite and Communist, an effort was undertaken by such self-appointed prosecutors as Arthur Schlesinger Jr. to indict the conservative city of Dallas as co-conspirator in Kennedy's death.

In his book, "A Thousand Days," Schlesinger depicts Dallas as a hotbed of right-wing reaction, "its politics . . . kept in a primitive and angry state by the Dallas Morning News . . . a city of violence and hysteria," whose "atmosphere was bound to affect people who were already weak, suggestible and themselves filled with chaos and hate."

COMES NOW a volume which exposes Schlesinger's theory as utter rot. The book is "Legend: The Secret World of Lee Harvey Oswald," and it is without question the most brilliant piece of scholarship written on Kennedy's assassin.

While the conclusions of the author, Edward J. Epstein, are not cast in concrete, the research is immense, and the circumstantial evidence almost conclusive that:

1) Oswald, an ex-Marine who had been a radar controller at Atsugi, Japan, whence the U-2s flew over Russia and China, probably betrayed the secrets of the secret spy plane to the Russians six months before they shot down Francis Gary Powers in May of 1960.

2) Rather than having become gradually disillusioned with Soviet life — Oswald's cover story for returning to the U.S. — the Kennedy assassin had been recruited and trained by the KGB to return to the United States as a deep cover agent for the Soviets.

3) John F. Kennedy may well have been murdered on the explicit orders of Fidel Castro in retaliation for a Kennedy-approved plot to eliminate the Cuban dictator and overthrow his regime.

The documentation is impressive. On arrival in Moscow in 1959, Oswald boasted to U.S. authorities that, as a former Marine radar man, he had information of "special interests" he intended to transmit to the Soviets.

While in Minsk, this 21-year-old Marine defector was given an apartment, sumptuous by Russian standards, with a magnificent view.

The diary in which Oswald relates his disenchantment with Russian life appears not to have been written over a period of months, but in two sittings.

Soon after Kennedy's killing, a self-described KGB colonel, Yuri Nosenko, who claimed to have handled the Oswald case for Soviet intelligence, defected in Geneva to tell the CIA that the KGB had neither interviewed nor recruited Oswald. Under interrogation, Nosenko's story collapsed in a dozen places; and CIA counterintelligence concluded Nosenko was a Soviet plant, a "disinformation agent" sent to the West to deceive U.S. intelligence and the Warren Commission about both Oswald and a Soviet "mole" burrowed deep inside the American intelligence apparatus.

PERHAPS THE MOST intriguing section of the book, however, deals with the final days of JFK.

In the fall of 1963, a long-time associate of Fidel Castro volunteered to murder Castro. On the same day the startling offer was relayed to CIA headquarters, Castro, through an extraordinary AP interview, warned, "United States leaders should think that if they are aiding terrorists' plans to eliminate Cuban leaders, they themselves will not be safe."

Nevertheless, a hand-picked Kennedy agent, Desmond Fitzgerald, weighed the risks of Cuban retaliation — and gave the CIA the green light to work with the prospective assassin of Fidel Castro. To indicate to that assassin that his plan to eliminate Castro had the specific approval of the president himself, Fitzgerald had inserted some signal sentences in one of JFK's speeches. The very day the man who had offered to kill Castro was given a poisoned pen in Paris, Kennedy was murdered in Dallas.

Why this work by a respected scholar has not received greater attention is intriguing. The establishment, it appears, does not wish to believe that the great martyr of American liberalism was engaged in assassination plots, that he may himself have died in Dallas on the orders of the Robin Hood of the Sierra Maestra, that Lee Harvey Oswald was a Soviet Agent, not some loon triggered by a climate of hate created by right-wingers and Texas oil barons.